



# EQUAL HEALTH

*The USU Center for Health Disparities newsletter funded by the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities*

## Welcome!

**W**elcome to the new *Equal Health* newsletter! While continuing the important work in the research and education on health disparities, the *Equal Health* newsletter reevaluated how to best serve you, our readers. With input from our partners—other health researchers, educators, and practitioners—we have cut down our size so that each issue can showcase one crucial message that we hope you find informative and most importantly, relevant to your own life. In addition, you will find information on upcoming health-related events in our community and opportunities to participate in studies. Together, we can make a difference and close the gap on health disparities so that we too can expect and enjoy healthy lives. This is our goal—and we have tried to state it loudly and clearly with our new logo. Take a second look: the “E” in “equal” is created from a large equal sign. Equal health for all—what better time to start our new issue than April? Gloria Ramsey explains why in the article to the right.

## April is National Minority Health Month: Come On People!

■ Gloria Ramsey

**R**acial and ethnic minorities in the United States struggle to enjoy equal rights. Research shows that when it comes to equal health—in terms of both health and healthcare—a gap exists that must be bridged. Organizations across the nation are working to raise awareness and implement initiatives throughout April for National Minority Health Month, in hopes of reducing this gap for the communities of color and vulnerable populations.

On a personal level, this national observance asks that we examine our own health, and the health of those we love, now and throughout the year, in an effort to rid our communities of preventable diseases. Many blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, Asian Americans, American Indians or Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders are living with illnesses and dying before their time. Healthy people make healthy communities, and health disparities undermine our

nation's health. We must implement programs to reduce the health problems faced by persons of color in both rural and urban communities.

### National Minority Health Month: It's History

The work of Dr. Booker T. Washington, founder and president of Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University), and his contributions to this nationally-recognized

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**Minority Health Month, cont.**

campaign must be acknowledged. In 1914, Dr. Washington kicked off a national public-health education campaign at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama to address the health and high death rates among blacks in America. He also emphasized the need for help from the federal government. The campaign, National Health Improvement Week, which later became the National Negro Health Week, was a community outreach effort bringing together community members, both black and white, all branches of government, and national organizations to lead a movement across the nation to reduce health disparities.

Tuskegee Institute served as headquarters for the National Negro Health Week movement for 15 years until 1930, when government agencies were established to carry out the goals of the campaign and make it a year-round effort. However, it wasn't until 1985, when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a seminal report, the Secretary's Task Force Report on Black and Minority Health, that health disparities became an issue for the national agenda. This report, which covered all ethnic minorities, documented the "excess" death among these groups, and became a catalyst for change. The Office of Minority Health was established in 1986

to implement the report's recommendations, and since then, greater attention has been placed on minority health.

Today's National Minority Health Month was launched in April 2001, when the National Minority Health Month Foundation (now the National Minority Quality Forum) acted in response to a HHS Healthy People 2010 initiative—a national health-promotion and disease-prevention plan that focused on diseases known to affect several minority groups across the life span. These diseases include: cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV infections/AIDS, infant mortality, and immunizations.

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**EQUAL HEALTH**

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**SPOTLIGHT****Gloria C. Ramsey**

Gloria C. Ramsey, a registered nurse and attorney, is well known for her work in bioethics, research ethics, nursing education and practice. Her research has focused primarily on questions concerning end-of-life care (with particular emphasis on why African Americans do and do not complete advance directives); health care disparities; and decisional capacity in the elderly. After graduating from Felician College, Lodi, NJ with her associate degree in nursing, and Jersey City State College, Jersey City, NJ with her Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Gloria received her Doctor of Law Degree in 1992 from Seton Hall University School of Law. In 1996, she completed a Certificate in Bioethics and the Medical Humanities at Columbia College of Physicians & Surgeons and the Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine.



In the fall of 2005, Gloria Ramsey was recruited to the Uniformed Services University where she is currently an Associate Professor in the

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**National Minority Health Month, cont.****Health Disparities: An Urgent Public Health Problem**

Simply put, the term “health disparities” refers to the differences in the quality of health and healthcare across racial and ethnic minority groups. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that African Americans have the highest rate of high blood pressure of all groups and tend to develop it younger than others. Asian Americans suffer disproportionately from certain types of cancer; and Hispanics and Latinos suffer from diabetes. Studies also show that communities of color receive lower quality health care and diagnostic services in areas such as maternal and child health, mental health, cancer, heart disease, asthma care, end of life care, and pain management. One of the major barriers to reducing disparities is lack of health insurance among communities of color. Although progress has been made, more work needs to be done to address all of the factors that make up the health of our communities.

**USU Center for Health Disparities**

The Uniformed Services University (USU) joined the fight five years ago when it established the Center for Health Disparities. Under the leadership of Drs. Tracy Sbrocco and Patricia Deuster, the Center’s goal is to reduce health disparities by conducting research on important health issues and establishing programs and interventions to improve health and healthcare for African Americans in Montgomery County. G.O.S.P.E.L., or the *Glorifying Our Spiritual and Physical Existence for Life* program is one community program the USU Center for Health Disparities has been actively involved with for several years. USU and Debbie Gold of Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services, in collaboration with the Black Minister’s Conference and 11 local African American churches, created G.O.S.P.E.L. to promote life-style practices for better health, like smoking cessation, exercise, nutrition, and stress reduction.

Come on People! Make a promise this month, and throughout the year, to talk with your healthcare provider about how you can reduce your risk of disease and improve your overall health. For information on National Minority Health Month, go to [www.nmhm.org](http://www.nmhm.org). Please also go to the Uniformed Service’s University Center for Health Disparities at [www.usuhs.mil/chd](http://www.usuhs.mil/chd).

**News from Dr. Patricia Deuster:**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the primary Federal government agency for conducting and supporting medical research. Its mission is to direct important medical discoveries that might improve people’s health and save lives. The issue of health disparities has been identified as one of NIH’s top 6 priorities.

**SPOTLIGHT****Gloria Ramsey, cont.**

Graduate School of Nursing, Assistant Research Professor in the School of Medicine Department of Medical and Clinical Psychology, and director, Community Research Engagement at the Uniformed Services University Center for Health Disparities.

Gloria Ramsey has and continues to receive national awards and recognition for her research, scholarly accomplishments, and passion for those who have not been treated equitably. Gloria dedicates this contribution in memory of her mother and father for their unconditional love and support, and for teaching her that with faith, a dream, and hard work, anything is possible. **■**

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## Minority Health Month, cont.

One way to ensure research on health disparities is by creating special centers like the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD). The goal of NCMHD is to promote minority health and reduce health disparities. This is done by funding research, fostering emerging programs, making good health information available, and outreach work to our communities.

Very recently (March 17, 2008), NIH announced the formation of another center focusing on health disparities: The Center for Genomics and Health Disparities (NICGHD) will look into how and why populations develop obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and other diseases. Dr. Charles Totimi, the new director, will direct research to gain insights into how culture, lifestyle, genetics, genomics and health interact to cause disease. It is hoped that the research conducted by these centers will unravel the critical factors needed to eliminate health disparities. =

## UPCOMING AREA EVENTS

### Childhood Obesity Seminar

Free and open to the public.

**DATE:** Tuesday, April 22, 2008

**TIME:** 8:00 am–4:30 pm

**LOCATION:**

Universities at Shady Grove  
The Camille Kendall Academic  
Center, Building III, Room 3241  
9636 Gudelsky Drive  
Rockville, MD 20850

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

[www.elpnet.org](http://www.elpnet.org).

### Senior Health Insurance Counseling

A volunteer from Maryland's Senior Health Insurance Assistance Program will meet with individual seniors and family members to help answer questions about claims, supplemental insurance, Medicare, etc.

**DATE:** Wednesday, April 16, 2008

**TIME:** 10:00 am

**LOCATION:**

Montgomery County Library  
Gaithersburg Branch

### Blood Pressure Clinic & Blood Monitoring Test for Glucose

A registered nurse will read and record your blood pressure. A free monthly service for adults provided by Arden Courts Assisted Living.

**DATE:** Wednesday, April 16, 2008

**TIME:** 1:30–2:30 pm

**LOCATION:**

Montgomery County Library  
Kensington Park Branch

### Blood Pressure Screenings

American Red Cross volunteer checks blood pressure.

*Multiple locations.*

**DATE:** Wednesday, April 16, 2008

**TIME:** 10:30–12:30 am

**LOCATION:**

Montgomery County Library  
Wheaton Branch

**DATE:** Thursday, April 17, 2008

**TIME:** 10:00–11:30 am

**LOCATION:**

Montgomery County Library  
Aspen Hill Branch

### Community Food and Health

A discussion about childhood obesity, what communities are doing to improve food access, and how it all ties into the national food system.

**DATE:** April 21, 2008

**TIME:** 10:00 am–12:00 pm

**COST:** \$10 with lunch included.

**LOCATION:**

The Charles Sumner School  
Museum and Archives  
1201 17th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

[www.elpnet.org/DCEvent-1.php](http://www.elpnet.org/DCEvent-1.php).

### African American Health Program Diabetes Dining Club for Prevention and Control

Enjoy physical activity, dine on healthy food, meet new friends and learn more about diabetes prevention and control.

*Multiple locations.*

*Continues on page 5*

**UPCOMING AREA EVENTS****FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Call Diane at 301-421-5767 to  
RSVP one week before club night.

**COST:** \$5, includes dinner.

**TIME:** 6:30–9:30 pm

**LOCATION:**

Goshen United Methodist  
Church  
19615 Goshen Road  
Gaithersburg, MD 20876

**DATES:**

May 5, 2008  
June 2, 2008

**LOCATION:**

Lincoln Park Community Center  
357 Frederick Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

**DATES:**

May 12, 2008  
June 9, 2008

**LOCATION:**

Colesville United Methodist Church  
53 Randolph Road  
Silver Spring, MD 20902

**DATES:**

April 24, 2008  
May 22, 2008  
June 26, 2008

### **The African American Health Program June 14 Health Freedom Walk**

The 3-mile Health Freedom Walk is an innovative project to promote increased physical activity and makes creative use of Maryland's integral role in the Underground Railroad. Participants will walk a section similar to the historical route slaves traveled in their quest for freedom, and, in turn, will become motivated to achieve their

own freedom from the bondage of sedentary lifestyle and poor health habits. All ages welcome.

**DATE:** June 14, 2008

**TIME:** 9:00 am registration,  
10:00 am walk.

**LOCATION:**

Rural Legacy Trail  
Woodlawn Manor Park  
16501 Norwood Road  
Sandy Spring

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Contact Xerxeser Kayodé at  
301-421-5445 or 240-777-1833.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Health Disparities Among African Americans**

African Americans are at greater risk for obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and cardiovascular disease than Caucasians. Day-to-day stress may contribute to these various diseases. The Human Performance Laboratory at the Uniformed Services University is studying why African Americans are at greater risk for these diseases by looking at measures of health (e.g. blood pressure), stress, lifetime experiences, lifestyle, and markers of health in blood and saliva. To learn more about the study and how stress may affect your health, please call 301-295-1371 or email the humanperformance@usuhs.mil.

### **African American Parenting Styles Study**

American University is conducting a study that examines the different contexts in which parents choose to use various discipline behaviors (e.g. spanking). The survey includes a number of items about parents' discipline behaviors, as well as demographic questions including ethnic identity, and takes about 30-40 minutes to complete. Participants must have partial or full responsibility for at least one child between the ages of 2 and 10 years old. In order to participate, parents need to email Morgan Pleasant at mp1324a@american.edu, who will then send a link to the study survey. One out of every 50 participants will win a \$100 cash prize!